

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT
FOR NEW AND BEGINNING TEACHERS**

PARENT COMMUNICATION

SEGMENT #1: ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND PARENT INTERACTION



VIDEO SEGMENT TRANSCRIPT



PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS



ANNOTATED RESEARCH BIBLIOGRAPHY



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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT FOR NEW AND BEGINNING TEACHERS

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Professional Development Toolkit for New and Beginning Teachers



The PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT FOR NEW AND BEGINNING TEACHERS is a research-based video streamed program with accompanying resource documents. The program is an outgrowth of a previous Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute (CEPI) online mentoring study at Virginia Commonwealth University. The findings of the online mentoring study revealed twelve topics new and beginning teachers felt additional university training would have led them to more effective use of best practices in the classroom. In this program, each of the twelve topics is presented in two to six stand alone video segments. The total number of segments is forty five. Suggested uses, in addition to personal viewing by K-12 teachers for self improvement, include professional development, mentor and mentee, university prospective teacher, and small or large group training.

The facilitators are university faculty and practitioners with field experience. Each is currently involved in teacher training or serves as a staff development administrator. All are currently engaged in educational research, teaching and/or educational policy development.

The teachers in the video programs are classroom teachers. Some of them were participants in the 2006 Online Mentoring Study in which the topics for this project were identified. They represent all disciplines in K-12 grades.

Resource documents for the programs are provided as PDF files to facilitate the use of the 45 video segments. The first set of documents is composed of: (1) a description of the project, (2) an introduction to program facilitators, including a definition of each topic, and a list of the video segments, and (3) a research formative study summary that helped to guide the project's development. The second set of documents is composed of: (1) a description of the project, (2) a full text transcript for each video segment, (3) a set of problems and solutions related to each video segment in the form of a work-study guide, and (4) an annotated bibliographic summary of references and Internet links for each transcript. Many of the organizations and agencies referenced in the transcripts are actively involved in the development of video and professional development presentations that support policy and advocacy.

Every reasonable effort is made to present current and accurate information. Internet content, however, does appear, disappear and change over time. CEPI, as a university-based educational policy research institute endorses no specific position of any listed group.

PARENT COMMUNICATION

SEGMENT #1: ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND PARENT INTERACTION

VIDEO SEGMENT TRANSCRIPT

Parent Communication: Communication strategies that can be used with parents to promote home and community support of student learning.

Facilitator: Dr. [Bill Boshier](#), Jr. Distinguished Professor
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AUDIO	VIDEO
<p>Fan and Chen, in a review of several studies on parent involvement and student academic achievement, found parental aspiration and expectation for the child's educational achievement to be among factors at the top of the list that have a positive effect on the academic achievement of students. What parents want and expect the child to do is very important to the child's success in school.</p> <p>I am Bill Boshier, Executive Director of the Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute and VCU Distinguished Professor of Public Policy and Education. In this segment, I want to share a few successful practices that relate to what you as a teacher can do to help your parents develop realistic goals for their child and to help him or her to experience success in school.</p> <p>Your school and other schools recognize that parental involvement and communication are extremely important to academic achievement. While a lot has been written and published about the topic, views are not identical. Englund, Luckner, and others in the December, 2004 issue of the Journal of Educational Psychology, for example, say that the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement may be bidirectional. They believe "the better the child does, the higher the parents' expectation; and the higher the parents' expectation, the better the child does." Others believe teacher expectations have a strong impact on performance in the classroom. What we do know is a young student often tends to perform at what he perceives to be the expected level.</p> <p>Then, by helping the child perform at the highest level he/she can perform benefits the teacher, the child and the parent. A joint school-home effort may begin with use of a comprehensive framework developed by the National Center of Family Literacy.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Set the Climate. Value parents as equal supporters. Help them set climate for learning at home and demonstrate that education is important.2. Communicate. Communication is two-way. Do what can be done to ensure that messages reach the parent and acknowledge that parents have differing communication styles.	<p>DR. BOSHER</p>

3. Develop Relationships. Know that relationship building takes time. Build trust and rapport even when the relationship involves new and changing expectations.

4. Provide information and help parents develop strategies. What information and what strategies? Each school is unique in many ways. Encouraging parental attendance at workshops on parent services, informal conversations with parents and with colleagues about parent involvement, and parent attendance at one-on-one conferences with community resource persons will help.

5. Engage in Learning. The teacher and parent goal should always be the same—academic success. Ideas that help parents structure time for homework, provide family experiences that support learning, and, ideas that enhance young students' learning during everyday routines to include mapping bus routes, grocery shopping, and excursions to parks are good places to start.

6. Develop Mentors and Leaders. View parents as leaders and mentors. Build upon their strengths and abilities. When they demonstrate that they are ready, involve them in idea generation and decision making.

Charts provided by the National Center for Family Literacy include these recommendations and others such as key ideas, thoughts for teachers, and ideas for parents.

Now, let's get reactions from teachers about how they help raise expectations and involve parents in their students' academic achievement.

My name is Sharon Brown. I am a middle school teacher. I am currently in my 2nd year of teaching. I have always thought that parents who are very much involved in their child's schooling at the elementary level appear to be less involved when their child reaches middle school. It seemed to me that parents of children at the middle school level often leave their children's academic success to them to master. This may relate to the fact that the child is thought to be much more independent once he or she becomes a middle school student.

SHARON BROWN

I agree that middle school requires the student to be more independent but this does not lessen the role of the parent. My experience is that students do better when they see their parents taking an active part of their education. I know there are many ways parents can help raise expectations; but there are three ways that have consistently been at the top for me.

First, I have learned that two-way communication is crucial to good academic achievement. I ask all my parents to stay in touch with me and the school. I urge them to be involved, be realistic, be open to learning options, and to be an advocate for their child.

Second, I talk at most parent conferences about the value of homework. I say to parents, it is best to have a consistent time and place for homework to be done. I emphasize the importance of homework in terms of review and encourage them to see homework as an extension of material covered in class. This also provides an opportunity to raise questions about concepts not understood. Parents often recall my statement: "Never accept the line: I don't have any homework."

Third, the importance of attendance cannot be overemphasized when dealing with the middle school student. A child not in school on a regular basis is unable to master the presented lessons of instruction. I encourage completion of missed work when a student is absent for illness or for any other reason."

My name is Andrew Givens and this is my fifth year of teaching. For the last four years I have taught at Wilder Middle School. Two of the biggest struggles that we face as teachers are parent involvement and communication. This will always be a struggle because it sometimes seems that the toughest parents with whom you want to speak. I have found that many children with discipline or academic issues face these problems in more than one class. There are some parents who after repeated contacts from teachers or administrators simply do not know what to do in order to better their child's performance. In some ways it goes to the core of human nature. If both parents and students are constantly discouraged they will eventually tune out the things that are being said by the teacher to help them. When I know that a child is going to have consistent issues in the classroom I go out of my way to develop a relationship with that parent. The best way to start that conversation is by enforcing the positive. I discuss some good points about the child along with negative behaviors. Next, I try to make sure that I follow up with both the parent and the child if the behavior is corrected. I often find that this is the most important part. By rewarding or recognizing the child's positive actions I reinforce those positive behaviors. In addition, the parent sees that their input is valuable and that it has an effect. I often find that my next parental interaction is much easier. When the child knows that their teacher and parents have a good relationship they will often be much more responsive to teacher correction and instruction.

As a principal or superintendent, I could say to us as teachers "make that call, send that email, provide access". I know it takes time! But, there is nothing that replaces the price of investment in parents and their children in order to provide academic success.

ANDREW GIVENS

DR. BOSHER



PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Ask yourself: How are you currently partnering with families and the community to improve learning in your classroom? What is going well? What would you like to change or improve in the future? What are you worrying about?

Suggested use for this module:

1. Analyze:

Please select one of the scenarios below and problem-solve a list of possible solutions. Record your ideas in the space provided. Discuss these ideas with your other educators (mentor, colleagues, or other beginning teachers).

2. View:

Watch the corresponding video on this topic. How does this information change your ideas?

3. Compare:

Revisit the scenario selected. Next, review the section entitled, "Possible Solutions" comparing the ideas listed with your own list.

4. Reflect:

How will you apply this new information to your current or future classroom? What goal will you set to help you begin to change your practices? What support is needed to help you accomplish this goal?

5. Apply:

List the first step towards change below. Create a timeline for success and place deadlines in your personal planner as a reminder. How will you know when you have met your goals?

Scenarios 1 & 2: Parent Communication

Scenario 1

A parent calls and emails constantly asking for information about upcoming events and probing for information about situations taking place in the classroom setting. Just yesterday, you replied to a request for field trip dates for the year and costs for the theatre assembly occurring next week. Another phone message arrives today while you are teaching science related to school supplies. How should you respond to this parent?

Scenario 2

As a beginning teacher, you recognize the need to partner with families to improve learning. You are attending evening activities and almost no parents are attending. Also, you have five parents who have not scheduled mandatory meetings for this year and are not responding to your note home. How can you meet the needs of all the families of your students?

Circle the scenario that you selected below:

Scenario 1

Scenario 2

Record a list of your own possible solutions here:

Summary & Goal Setting:

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Building Parental Involvement

Communication

- Always begin with the positive. Good news phone calls or postcards sent early in the year develop a positive relationship and provide families with timely and specific comments about their child.

- Newsletters, letters of notification, and materials should use language and vocabulary which are easily understood by all parents.
- As you design newsletters, consider the following tips:
 - ✓ Don't overwhelm. Families are likely to read something short and informational rather than a lengthy document. Try sending communications home every few weeks instead of a longer version four to five times a year.
 - ✓ Work collaboratively. Creating a joint newsletter with others on your grade level will divvy up the work load and increase the quality of your communications.
 - ✓ Spotlight student work. Consider including a one-page section which highlights cooperative learning projects or individual work. Rotate the students who are being showcased.
 - ✓ Create a standard newsletter format. Recurring columns or features makes your writing tasks much easier. Suggestions include: Calendar/ Upcoming Activities, Parenting Tips/Resources, 'Frequently-asked Questions' section, Instructional technique or weekly activity, Quotes or visuals, 'Don't Forget' section highlighting key event details, Special thanks, websites, and/or Volunteer Opportunities.
- Always hold conversations in appropriate locations (classroom rather than hallways).
- Send home a form at the start of the year which asks parents if they are willing to volunteer and in what capacity. Have a space for volunteers to work in and provide volunteers with meaningful tasks to complete (such as listening to children read or publishing writing).

Scheduling

- Days, times, and location of events are flexible to ensure that all parents can attend some of your events. Many parents may travel or work during the evenings, so occasional early morning and/or weekend activities invite all families to participate in school activities.

Parent Conferences

- Give parents plenty of notice when scheduling conferences. Smile and greet them at the classroom door. Thank the parent for taking the time to come and work together with the school.
- Begin conferences in a relaxed manner (consider coffee or refreshments) and be professional and understanding throughout the conversation. Start with something that is going well and then ask the parent to tell you more about their child. Often, parents will initiate or broach a difficult subject first making the conversation much easier to conduct. Consider sitting face-to-face next to one another rather than conducting the conference or meetings across a desk.
- If you are holding multiple conferences on a particular day, establish a waiting area outside the classroom with a couple of chairs and a conference schedule. This will prevent disruptions by parents who arrive early or at the wrong appointment time. Place photos of classroom projects, newsletters,

or a classroom-created book on the chairs to provide parents with something to browse while they wait.

- Make sure everything is graded and all assessments are up-to-date prior to scheduling your conferences. Demonstrate suggestions or concerns by 'showing' rather than 'telling'. For example, if you are concerned that a student is rushing through assignments, display a sample paper which serves as an example of this concern. Always have a copy of previous report cards to refer back to as needed during the conference.
- Let your parents know that you are willing to stop and answer questions at any point along the way. Listen and find positive points throughout the conversation.
- Create a file folder with copies of sheets addressing typical concerns (reading strategies, homework help, curriculum overviews, school calendars) at your conference table. During the conference, it will then be easy to pull out and distribute these forms as needed.
- Be respectful and end on time. Families may have childcare or other meetings. Sticking to your schedule will benefit everyone.
- End the conference by reviewing one or two key points for improvement as well as a student strength. Some schools use a parent meeting form to document progress and suggestions during conferences. If you are summarizing the content of your meeting on a form, have the parent sign it and provide a copy right away for them to take home. This allows the parent to leave with the critical information in hand and eliminates the need to remember to copy and send the form home at a later date.

ANNOTATED RESEARCH BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ❖ Parents of culturally diverse students can be an untapped resource in today's classrooms. Care should be taken to keep parents informed through communication.

Hicks, Cathy; Glasgow, Neal & McNary, Sarah J. (2005). *What successful mentors do*. CA:Corwin Press, p. 177.

- ❖ Allow students to work in small groups to preview their homework assignments to ensure that all understand the assignment. This also helps parents who may not be able to read the assignment in English.

Hicks, Cathy; Glasgow, Neal & McNary, Sarah. (2005). *What successful mentors do*. CA:Corwin Press, p. 177.

- ❖ As a "new teacher on the block," try to talk to others familiar with the student before making calls or planning conferences with parents.

Hicks, Cathy; Glasgow, Neal & McNary, Sarah. (2005). *What successful mentors do*. CA:Corwin Press, p. 183.

- ❖ Being organized and prepared in advance of the parent-teacher conference with potential solutions to the problems a teacher expects to hear can reap rewards with increased communication and rapport with parents.

Hicks, Cathy; Glasgow, Neal & McNary, Sarah J. (2005). *What successful mentors do*. CA:Corwin Press, p. 183.

- ❖ Teachers say parents may not make the first move but generally will respond when asked to help at home or play role in the classroom. Some teachers involve parents in academic activities such as reading and tutoring, while other teachers turn to parents to relieve them of duties that otherwise would get in the way of teaching.

Become a teacher: survival guide for new teachers. (n.d.). Retrieved October 5, 2007, from <http://www.ed.gov/teachers/become/about/survivalguide/parent.html>

- ❖ Contact parents early before a problem occurs, particularly when there's good news to report.

Become a teacher: survival guide for new teachers. (n.d.). Retrieved October 5, 2007, from <http://www.ed.gov/teachers/become/about/survivalguide/survguide.pdf>

- ❖ Address parents' concerns head on. If you are taking a pedagogical approach that raises questions, work to show parents the benefits of your methods and explain your reasoning to them.

Become a teacher: survival guide for new teachers. (n.d.). Retrieved October 5, 2007, from <http://www.ed.gov/teachers/become/about/survivalguide/parent.html>

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